

Probe and system for extracting gases from a process environment

The present invention relates in general to systems for the regulation and control of chemical processes which involve the production of gas, for example processes of combustion.

Systems are known for the extraction of gases from a furnace, provided with probes to be mounted within the furnace, in which the gases extracted are conveyed to analyser devices.

For the extraction of the gases such systems utilise a small pump of low power and low pressure, in suction (through the probe). This implies treating the gases hot/moist, giving rise to corrosive acids which attack the couplings, the tubes and the various components involved in the flow of gas, aggravating the situation. For the purpose of avoiding the precipitation of condensate in the system (because it draws in hot/moist gas), it is necessary to heat the aspiration tube, the filter and the tube but with declining results (problems of packing, acids etc).

The probes further have serious problems of blockage of the gas aspiration tube, which make operation unreliable.

Moreover, in traditional probes the filtering of dust is achieved solely by the filter which is overloaded and becomes clogged. The cleaning of the probe is achieved by a washing cycle with compressed air (programmable) but often it is insufficient fully to restore it and, moreover, this introduces contamination into the gas to be analysed.

Because of these problems the values of the furnace gas analysis are approximate and irregular, leading to a misunderstanding of a correct management of the line, especially in the presence of alternative fuels. With these latter, even the best probes currently in commercial use show their limits. Only by meticulous and continuous surveillance and maintenance by man is it possible to obtain results, which even then are only just sufficient.

One object of the invention is that of providing a probe for the extraction of gases from a process environment which is able to prevent or at least reduce the occurrence of clogging of the probe, that is to say to guarantee continuity of use without continual maintenance interventions (with improvements in the gas extraction system and reliability of the analysis).

This object is achieved according to the invention by a probe for extracting of gases from a process environment having the characteristics defined in Claim 1.

Preferred embodiments for the probe are defined in the dependent claims.

Another object of the invention is that of providing a system for the extraction of gases from a process environment which reduces in the most complete manner the ingress of dust and condensate through the probe, as well as guaranteeing continuity and reliability of the analysis.

This object is achieved according to the invention by a system for extracting gases from a process environment, having the characteristics defined in Claim 11.

Preferred embodiments of the system are defined in the dependant claims.

This system, by co-operating with the probe according to the invention, lowers the dust (filter less stressed), makes it possible to dry the gas (no clogging and no origination of acids) and is self cleaning without the aid of compressed air but by utilising the same process gas (continuity of analysis since it is not altered).

Its use makes it possible to extract combustion gases from a furnace so that they can be analysed by means of classical analysers. It makes it possible to obtain reliable analysis of the combustion gases of the furnaces. Consequently, there is the possibility of optimising the control of the installation (reducing fuel consumption and improving the quality/quantity of the furnace product) and of monitoring/reducing atmospheric emissions.

It is applicable to any type of furnace (in any conditions of use; temperature, dust level, steam, acid etc) with any type of fuel (even alternative/waste disposal fuel) and any type of process material.

The probe has been designed for cement furnaces but can be used in process environments in industries of different type; steelworks, thermo-electric plants, chemical/petrochemical industries, carbon grinding and storage, incinerators, explosive powder storage silos, that is to say in all those sectors where it is required to extract gas for subsequent analysis (furnaces, silos, chimneys, pipework etc).

The salient characteristic of the probe and the system according to the invention is the reduced necessity for maintenance. This is achieved by avoiding aspiration of dust/condensate, and thanks to the violent and continuous spraying of compressed gas ensured by the compressor.

The filter has a long life since it is self-cleaning by means of the powerful counter current flow of gas during the rapid discharge for probe cleaning.

Moreover a reduction of dry dust is achieved by using the compressed gas from the furnace and without a water spray. There is moreover a drying of the gas with consequent reduction of acids. The system is self-cleaning with a continuous cycle, again by the effect of the compressed gas, and therefore does not require the washing cycle with compressed air which would falsify the gas analysis (by polluting it) but by using the gas from the furnace. This avoids having to use a large number of control panels for the treatment of the gas (with filters, antacids, bubbling chambers etc), control panels for solenoid valves and various dedicated electrical control panels (with PLC). This leads to a reduction of the associated problems and costs.

For use at high temperatures the probe is water-cooled. It has an anti-condensate interspace for decoupling the hot zone (gas circuit) from the cold zone (cooling water jacket), permitting the gas extracted to maintain its temperature. This arrangement avoids the formation of condensate in the inner wall of the aspiration tube, thereby minimising clogging of the dust. The two chambers for gas and cooling can be separated because they are coupled with flanges. This makes it possible to remove only the gas circuit from the

furnace (for a possible inspection and cleaning, even with the furnace in operation) leaving only the cooling system fixed to the furnace.

The reliability and continuity of the system makes it possible to utilise its output for automatic furnace management (not having compressed air washing which gives rise to O₂ peaks). The capacity of the compressor is high, therefore the response is faster than in usual systems, and possible micro-losses have no influence. Consequently a more reliable analysis is achieved.

The probe is easy to install in a short time, not requiring a great deal of work for adaptation of the existing system to be able to connect it. Moreover, it does not require a great deal of care in research for the optimum positioning in the furnace (the minimum dust point etc).

A preferred but non-limitative example of the invention will now be described making reference to the attached drawings, in which;

- Figure 1 is a general diagram of a system for the extraction of burnt gases from a furnace according to the invention;

- Figure 2 is a schematic side view of a probe for extraction of burnt gases from a furnace, according to the invention;

- Figure 3 is a schematic side view of a probe of Figure 2 without the cooling jacket; and

- Figure 4 is a schematic side view of the cooling jacket of the probe of Figure 2.

Making reference to Figure 1, a system for the extraction of gas from a process environment, for example a furnace (not illustrated) comprises a probe S, a compressor C, a piping 20 for supply of cooling water to the probe S and a piping 30 for the discharge of this water from the probe S, a piping 40 for aspiration of gas from the probe S and a piping 50 for the re-injection of the gas to the probe S/process environment.

The system is supplied with an electric voltage for the compressor C and solenoid valves EV1G, EV2G, a fluid, for example water, for cooling the probe S, and a compressed fluid, for example air, for the solenoid valve actuators EV1G, EV2G. Alternatively, a low temperature refrigerator with closed circuit water could be used for the cooling system.

With reference to Figure 3, the probe S in its essential form comprises two concentric tubes 1 and 2, for example in AISI304 steel, but it is possible to utilise material more suitable to high temperatures and resistant to acid corrosion. The outer tube 2 is dedicated to the aspiration of gas, the inner tube 1 is the gas delivery. This probe S is usable in low temperature environments. To utilise it with high temperatures it is necessary to provide it with a water-cooling jacket (illustrated in Figure 4).

In Figure 2 the probe S is shown provided with a gas circulation chamber and a water-cooling jacket CRA. This version (with water cooling) is for high temperatures and comprises five concentric tubes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. The probe S is fitted to and fixed in the wall of the furnace by means of a support flange FS. The probe head TS is fitted with a

protection cone CP acting as a first barrier against the ingress of impurities into the probe.

The three outermost tubes 3, 4, 5 constitute the cooling chamber CRA through which flows water (fixed solidly to the furnace by means of the flange FS to permit its fitting and fixing). The space between the innermost tube 3 and the intermediate tube 4 of the jacket CRA is connected to the water supply piping 20 by means of a water filter FA for cooling water, and the space between the intermediate tube 4 and the outermost tube 5 of the jacket CRA is connected to the water discharge piping 30 by means of a manual valve VMA for regulation of the rate of flow of cooling water. The said spaces are fluidly connected at the head TS of the probe. Upstream of the supply piping 20 and downstream of the discharge piping 30 are disposed respective coolant water relief valves VSA. In the discharge piping 30 are, moreover, disposed a sensor Ta for control of the water temperature, a sensor Pa for control of the water pressure and a sensor Fa for control of the water flow.

The two innermost tubes 1 and 2 constitute the gas extraction probe true and proper (fitted and coupled to the coolant jacket by means of flange FL to allow its removal in a simple and rapid manner, even with the installation in operation - see Figures 2 and 3).

The coupling of the two chambers (gas and cooling, that is to say the second and third tube 2, 3, from the inside working outwardly), gives rise to an interspace IN, blind at the probe bottom (outer furnace side) and open at the head TS (inner furnace size) that is to say it is licked by the gas. This avoids the formation of condensation within the gas

aspiration tube 2 (second tube) and makes it possible for the gas withdrawn not to be excessively cooled. The gas is aspirated into the chamber CA constituted by the first and second tube 1, 2 and injected again into the interior of the furnace through of the concentric central tube (first tube 1), by means of a compressor C. The furnace side end UG of the central tube is throttled so that the ejected gas is compressed. Preferably, this end has a nozzle. Alternatively, the same central tube 1 can be designed to inject the gas towards the probe head TS (for example it can be formed as a capillary tube). In this way the gas acquires a certain pressure and kinetic energy, constituting a barrier against dust and effecting cleaning of the probe head TS. In substance the gas is aspirated through the piping 40 and returned to the furnace with an adequate pressure and velocity through the piping 50, by means of the compressor C. In the gas aspiration and delivery circuit 40, 50 (furnace - compressor C - furnace) there is fitted a branch 41 which delivers a small percentage of fluid to be analysed to traditional analysers O₂-CO-NO_x by means of a pump PM with a take off upstream of the compressor C. Upstream of the analysers are disposed a regulator RF for the flow of gas to the analysers and a sensor P_{2g} for control of the pressure of the gas to the analysers. These analysers are moreover protected by a filter F_{3G}, which acts as an anti-acid/condensate. Downstream of the analysers is disposed a gas discharge SG exiting from the analysers.

Before reaching the compressor C and the pump PM the gas is suitably filtered by upstream filters F_{1G} and F_{2G} in the aspiration piping 40. The filter F_{1G} is connected to a dust decanter D to reduce the possible dust present in the circuit. The high flow rate of the circulating fluid

guarantees short response times which benefit the management of the furnace.

A sensor P1g for control of the gas pressure of the compressor and a valve VSG for gas overpressure of the compressor C are connected to the delivery of the compressor C.

There are also two reservoirs S1G (depressurized) and S2G (pressurized) in the system, on the aspiration and delivery sides of the compressor C respectively. These perform the function of collecting the condensate and stabilising the pressure/depression of the compressor. In particular, the reservoir S2G forms part of a refrigerator/dryer RE for reducing the condensate. Downstream of the reservoir S2G is connected an automatic condensate discharge valve VAC arranged to discharge the condensate SC. The reservoirs are also furnished with two timing solenoid valves EV1G and EV2G activating the respective servo-valves in a cyclic manner for times which can be set, depending on the requirements. The solenoid valve EV1G is a two-way valve mounted between the depressurized reservoir S1G and the aspiration of the probe S, and has the function of stopping the aspiration from the probe S so that the thrust of its delivery is reinforced to improve the cleaning of the probe head. Downstream of the solenoid valve EV1G is disposed a sensor Fg for control of the flow of gas to the compressor C. The three-way solenoid valve EV2G mounted upstream of the preceding one, has the function of violently discharging, with a full jet, the quantity of fluid in the pressure reservoir S2G, towards the aspiration tube 2. This enormous quantity of fluid flows at high velocity in the opposite direction from the normal flow, sweeping towards the furnace interior any possible deposits

of material, thus effecting counter-current (back-washing) cleaning.

To monitor the good operation and to obtain an indication if it is becoming clogged, a vacuumeter Vg is mounted on board the probe S on the aspiration tube 2, and a manometer Mg is mounted on the delivery tube 1. In particular, the vacuumeter Vg is mounted on a cruciform connector CR, and the manometer Mg is mounted on a T-connector TE. The connectors CR, TE and nuts DT (with washers for sealing the gas in a gas-tight manner) also serve to hold the two tubes together. This arrangement makes it possible to make the central gas delivery tube 1 slidable with respect to the aspiration tube 2 for an optimum adjustment of the device.

The type of probe proposed makes it possible to have dry dust exclusion, gas drying and head cleaning in a continuous manner, avoiding packing of material. The analysis of the aspirated gas is continuous without interruptions (not deviated even for an instant) since there is no necessity for the cleaning cycle with compressed air (which gives rise to O₂ peaks). This is achieved by utilising the compressor which makes the same gas re-circulate in the furnace; it aspirates and throws the gas back into the furnace, with a discrete pressure and kinetic energy, by means of the throttling of the nozzle positioned at the internal extremity of the delivery tube. Since the said tube is concentric with the aspiration tube, it creates a dust-filtering barrier as well as keeping the head clean. This, likewise, permits a sufficient drying of the aspirated gas. The cold and dried gas cleaned of dust does not give rise to condensation or acids, and does not leads to packing. The dust and condensate are cut out from the beginning and returned to the

furnace, avoiding transporting them along the analysis installation. This is of benefit to the tubing, the connectors, the compressor, the pump, the analysers, and the control and security sensors, and will result in a greater efficiency and duration of these. Moreover it is possible to make these of more economic commercial type and it is not necessary for them to be of the more expensive anti-acid type. The probe and the system according to the invention reduce dust (less stressed filter), dry the gas (no accretion and no origination of acids) and the probe is self-cleaning without the aid of compressed air but by utilising the same process gas (continuity of analysis since it is not altered).

The strong point of this probe is the compressor central-tube which permits the gas to re-circulate to the furnace with a certain pressure and kinetic energy. Naturally, in place of the compressor it is possible to utilise another type of continuous cycle machine.

With the compressor and the branching principle one obtains; dust-free and dried gas (by the barrier effect) and self-cleaning head without the necessity for the compressed air washing cycle (by means of a continuous cycle without interruption and alteration of the analysis gas).